

Conceptual Metaphors of Knowledge in *The Names* by Don DeLillo

Tran Thi Le Dung
Faculty of English, Hanoi Open University, Hanoi, Vietnam

Abstract—This study examines the conceptualization of knowledge through metaphors in *The Names* (1982) by Don DeLillo, drawing on the framework of Lakoff and Johnson (1980). Focusing on ontological and structural metaphors, it investigates how metaphorical patterns construct the author's perspective on knowledge. The study employs a primary qualitative mixed-method approach to analyze metaphorical expressions in the novel. The findings identify nine major conceptual metaphors of knowledge, including: (1) KNOWLEDGE IS AN OBJECT; (2) KNOWLEDGE IS A CONTAINER; (3) KNOWLEDGE IS A SUBSTANCE; (4) KNOWLEDGE IS AN ENTITY; (5) KNOWLEDGE IS A POSSESSION; (6) KNOWLEDGE IS A SYSTEM; (7) KNOWLEDGE IS A CODE; (8) KNOWLEDGE IS A STRUCTURE; and (9) KNOWLEDGE IS A NETWORK. These results contribute to a deeper understanding of how knowledge is linguistically and conceptually structured in literary discourse.

Index Terms—conceptual metaphors, knowledge, ontological metaphors, structural metaphors, literary discourse

I. INTRODUCTION

Cognitive linguistics is an interdisciplinary field that investigates the relationship between language, thought, and human cognition. Emerging in the late twentieth century as a reaction against formalist and structuralist approaches, this field emphasizes that language is deeply rooted in human experience and the conceptualization of the world. Scholars such as Lakoff (1987), Beknazarova et al. (2021), and Hicke and Kristensen-McLachlan (2024) argue that linguistic structures reflect general cognitive processes rather than functioning as autonomous grammatical rules. Consequently, cognitive linguistics has significantly impacted disciplines such as semantics, discourse analysis, translation, and literary studies, and has progressively solidified its status in linguistic research in Vietnam, especially in the examination of metaphors and meaning constructions.

Within this framework, metaphor is no longer regarded as merely a rhetorical device but as a fundamental mechanism of thought. Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), revolutionized the traditional view by defining metaphor as a cognitive process in which one conceptual domain is understood in terms of another. As Kövecses (2010) explains, conceptual metaphors are systematic and grounded in embodied experience, enabling individuals to understand abstract concepts through more concrete domains, as reflected in everyday expressions such as “grasping an idea” or “acquiring knowledge”.

In contemporary literature, Don DeLillo is notable for his profound exploration of the relationship between language and cognition. His novel, *The Names* (1982), demonstrates that language not only reflects but also constructs how people understand and interpret the world. In this context, knowledge is considered a complex, abstract, and multifaceted concept. According to Gibbs (2008), knowledge can be defined as “justified true belief”, while more recent studies such as Manerko (2019), Muis et al. (2021), and St Amant (2022) emphasize its dynamic and context-dependent nature in processes of reasoning and cognition. Furthermore, research in developmental psychology (Dasen, 2022; Gunawardena et al., 2025) highlights that knowledge is constructed through social interaction and is shaped by language, culture, and environmental factors.

This study suggests that understanding knowledge cannot rely on a single definition. Instead, conceptual metaphor provides a useful analytical framework for explaining how individuals conceptualize and structure knowledge through more concrete domains. Therefore, investigating conceptual metaphors of knowledge in *The Names* not only helps clarify how this concept is represented in literature but also extends the application of cognitive linguistics in textual analysis. Simultaneously, the study provides interdisciplinary benefits, aiding learners in cultivating analytical thinking, improving interpretive abilities, and acquiring a more profound understanding of the function of language in knowledge construction. Thus, the current study aims to answer the following questions:

- (1) What conceptual metaphors of knowledge can be found in *The Names*?
- (2) What do the conceptual metaphors of knowledge utilized in *The Names* imply?

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

A. Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT)

Since its introduction by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), CMT has highlighted the role of metaphor as a cognitive mechanism through which individuals understand and experience one conceptual domain in terms of another. Within this framework, a more concrete and experientially grounded source domain provides the structural and inferential basis for conceptualizing a more abstract target domain. This relationship is typically expressed in the form TARGET DOMAIN IS SOURCE DOMAIN, or more generally as A IS B. A commonly cited example is TIME IS MONEY, in which the abstract notion of time is structured through concepts associated with economic value, such as spending, saving, or wasting. As Carston and Yan (2023) argue, such instances reveal that conceptual metaphors rely on experiential associations that are cognitively natural and culturally reinforced.

In addition to these fundamental operations, contemporary research in cognitive linguistics has broadened the scope of CMT by investigating the intricacies of metaphor networks, the influence of culture, and the interplay between metaphor and other cognitive processes. Studies recently have shown that conceptual metaphors often form multilayered systems, in which primary metaphors rooted in bodily experience combine to generate more abstract or culturally specific metaphorical structures. Moreover, empirical findings from psycholinguistics, cognitive psychology, and neurolinguistics increasingly support the claim that metaphor is embodied, demonstrating that metaphor comprehension activates perceptual and motor areas of the brain (Gibbs, 2008; Ospina et al., 2024). These results bolster the idea that metaphors are not mere superficial embellishments of language but essential elements of the conceptual framework that facilitates our comprehension of abstract notions, including emotion, morality, time, and knowledge.

B. Ontological Metaphors

Ontological metaphors provide a cognitive mechanism through which abstract, intangible, or diffuse experiences are conceptualized as concrete objects, bounded entities, or substances. Through this process, non-physical phenomena, such as emotions, thoughts, time, or social interactions, are treated as if they possess physical form, clearly defined boundaries, and perceptual stability. This enables individuals to refer to, quantify, and reason about otherwise elusive experiences. As Gibbs et al. (2004) point out, such metaphors are grounded in recurring patterns of bodily movement, spatial interaction, and perceptual experience, which fundamentally shape the organization of conceptual systems. Recent research further suggests that ontological metaphors extend beyond purely linguistic conventions and are deeply rooted in embodied cognition. Ospina et al. (2024) argue that these metaphors are supported by embodied simulation, reflecting how individuals mentally recreate physical experiences when conceptualizing abstract ideas. Similarly, findings from developmental and gesture studies by Özçalışkan and Goldin-Meadow (2025) indicate that children's early metaphorical expressions often emerge from gestures that treat abstract concepts as physical entities. This provides strong evidence that ontological metaphors originate from embodied interaction and may develop prior to their full realization in verbal language.

C. Structural Metaphors

Structural metaphors involve the mapping of an entire conceptual framework from one domain onto another. Rather than focusing on isolated features, these metaphors transfer complex relational structures, allowing individuals to understand and reason about abstract concepts through the internal organization of more familiar and concrete domains. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue that systematic cross-domain mappings fundamentally shape human thought through structural metaphors. Contemporary studies continue to reinforce this perspective. Gibbs (2004) highlights that structural metaphors reveal the deep interconnection between bodily experience and conceptualization, emphasizing their central role in everyday cognition. Likewise, Alduais et al. (2022) argue that the consistency of metaphorical mappings across different discourse genres demonstrates that such patterns are not incidental linguistic habits but rather entrenched conceptual structures shaped by embodiment, cultural context, and communicative practices. These findings underscore the stability, pervasiveness, and cultural significance of structural metaphors in human thought and language.

III. METHODOLOGY

A predominantly qualitative mixed-method approach is used in the present study. The qualitative component involves descriptive analysis, aiming to explore and explain how conceptual metaphors of knowledge are represented in *The Names* by Don DeLillo. Meanwhile, the quantitative figures support the study by identifying the frequency and distribution of different types of conceptual metaphors, thereby providing a clearer overview of their patterns of use within the text. This approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of metaphorical structures in the novel.

In addition, a documentary research method is employed for data collection. The researcher systematically selects and compiles relevant excerpts from *The Names* that contain metaphorical expressions related to the concept of knowledge. The collected data are then analyzed by identifying the source and target domains involved in each metaphor, as well as interpreting their meanings within the context of the text. The analysis focuses on uncovering how these metaphorical expressions contribute to the construction of knowledge in the novel. The primary data source for this research is *The Names*, which serves as the basis for all analytical procedures.

IV. RESULTS

A. *Ontological Metaphors of Knowledge*

In this study, there are five ontological metaphors of knowledge identified. Table 1 provides information about five source domains that clarify knowledge. Overall, it can be observed that the most frequent usage is KNOWLEDGE IS AN OBJECT with 41.18%, and the second position is KNOWLEDGE IS AN ENTITY with 23.53%. KNOWLEDGE IS A CONTAINER keeps the third position with 17.65%. KNOWLEDGE IS A POSSESSION has a percentage of 11.76% of usage in the novel. Finally, the conceptual metaphor KNOWLEDGE IS A SUBSTANCE has a percentage of 5.88%.

TABLE 1
FREQUENCY OF ONTOLOGICAL METAPHORS OF KNOWLEDGE IN “THE NAMES”

No.	Ontological metaphors of knowledge	Number of metaphorical expressions	%
1	KNOWLEDGE IS AN OBJECT	7	41.18
2	KNOWLEDGE IS AN ENTITY	4	23.53
3	KNOWLEDGE IS A CONTAINER	3	17.65
4	KNOWLEDGE IS A POSSESSION	2	11.76
5	KNOWLEDGE IS A SUBSTANCE	1	5.88
Total		17	100

(a). *Knowledge Is an Object*

The conceptual metaphor KNOWLEDGE IS AN OBJECT conceptualizes knowledge as a tangible entity that can be obtained, held, transferred, or lost. This metaphor is grounded in everyday physical experiences with objects that can be possessed and manipulated. When mapped onto the abstract domain of KNOWLEDGE, it allows people to understand it as something that individuals can acquire, store, or exchange. Linguistic expressions such as “grasp an idea”, “acquire knowledge”, or “lose information” reflect this conceptualization.

TABLE 2
METAPHORICAL EXAMPLES REPRESENTING “KNOWLEDGE IS AN OBJECT”

No.	Metaphorical examples	
	OBJECT	KNOWLEDGE
1	“We thought we <i>knew this setting</i> .” (p. 83)	Knowledge is treated as something one can possess or hold mentally.
2	“The secret...It meant something to me...I wasn’t in a hurry <i>to pass it on</i> .” (p. 120)	Knowledge is transferable, like a physical item passed between individuals.
3	“I am interested in <i>knowing</i> ...” (p. 127)	Knowledge becomes something one can seek or acquire, like a desired object.
4	“My life is going by, and I can’t get a <i>grip on it</i> .” (p. 146)	Understanding is conceptualized as physically grasping something.
5	“It was <i>necessary to remember</i> , to dream of the pristine earth.” (p. 148)	Knowledge is treated as something that can be retrieved and mentally handled like a tangible entity.
6	“They mock our need to <i>structure and classify</i> ,...” (p. 150)	Knowledge is conceptualized as something that can be organized, categorized, and systematized.
7	“He could <i>read it like a book</i> .” (p. 165)	Knowledge is structured and accessible like a readable object.

(b). *Knowledge Is an Entity*

The conceptual metaphor KNOWLEDGE IS AN ENTITY conceptualizes knowledge as something that grows, evolves, or develops over time. This metaphor draws on human experience with living organisms that undergo processes of growth, adaptation, and change. When mapped onto the domain of KNOWLEDGE, it allows people to perceive it as dynamic rather than static. Expressions such as “knowledge grows”, “ideas evolve”, or “knowledge develops over time” illustrate this conceptualization.

TABLE 3
METAPHORICAL EXAMPLES REPRESENTING “KNOWLEDGE IS AN ENTITY”

No.	Metaphorical examples	
	ENTITY	KNOWLEDGE
1	“Everything he reads and learns is made to <i>serve</i> .” (p. 142)	Knowledge is controlled and directed like a subordinate agent.
2	“This knowledge has managed to <i>elude me</i> .” (p. 146)	Knowledge acts autonomously, capable of movement or avoidance.
3	“It <i>eludes me</i> , it <i>defeats me</i> .” (p. 146)	Knowledge is an adversary that resists comprehension.
4	“He wanted a design that will make this array... <i>speak to him</i> .” (p. 147)	Knowledge is given communicative ability, acting like a human speaker.

(c). *Knowledge Is a Container*

The conceptual metaphor KNOWLEDGE IS A CONTAINER conceptualizes knowledge as a bounded space that can hold, store, or enclose information. This metaphor is grounded in everyday physical experience with containers such as boxes, rooms, or vessels, which have clear boundaries and can be filled, emptied, or accessed. When mapped onto the abstract domain of KNOWLEDGE, this metaphor allows individuals to understand knowledge as something that exists within definable limits and can be entered, accumulated, or organized within conceptual boundaries.

TABLE 4
METAPHORICAL EXAMPLES REPRESENTING "KNOWLEDGE IS A CONTAINER"

No.	Metaphorical examples	
	CONTAINER	KNOWLEDGE
1	"A knowledge <i>bounded by emptiness and fear</i> ." (p. 83)	Knowledge exists within limits or boundaries shaped by emotional constraints.
2	"...although I tried my damndest to <i>pry it out</i> of them, <i>wheelde it out</i> by whatever means." (p. 146)	Knowledge is conceptualized as being inside a person and extractable.
3	"The thing that <i>encompasses</i> these." (p. 146)	Knowledge functions as a space that includes and organizes elements.

(d). *Knowledge Is a Possession*

In the conceptual metaphor KNOWLEDGE IS A POSSESSION, knowledge is conceptualized as something that individuals can own or control. This metaphor is closely related to the experience of owning physical property, where possessions signify value, status, and power. When applied to the domain of KNOWLEDGE, this metaphor highlights the social dimension of knowledge as a resource that can distinguish individuals or groups.

TABLE 5
METAPHORICAL EXAMPLES REPRESENTING "KNOWLEDGE IS A POSSESSION"

No.	Metaphorical examples	
	POSSESSION	KNOWLEDGE
1	"We had our <i>proof</i> ." (p.103)	Knowledge is something owned collectively, indicating certainty and authority.
2	"The knowledge is <i>special</i> ... <i>you find yourself protective of it</i> ." (p.120)	Knowledge is treated as valuable property requiring protection.

(e). *Knowledge Is a Substance*

In the conceptual metaphor KNOWLEDGE IS A SUBSTANCE, knowledge is understood as a material entity that can accumulate, flow, or be absorbed. This metaphor draws on human experience with physical substances such as liquids or gases, which can fill spaces, spread across environments, or be contained within boundaries. When applied to the abstract concept of KNOWLEDGE, this metaphor allows people to conceptualize knowledge as something that can gradually increase, circulate among individuals, or permeate social contexts.

TABLE 6
METAPHORICAL EXAMPLES REPRESENTING "KNOWLEDGE IS A SUBSTANCE"

No.	Metaphorical examples	
	SUBSTANCE	KNOWLEDGE
1	"A <i>frenzy of knowing</i> , of terrible confirmation." (p. 102)	Knowledge behaves like a substance that can intensify or accumulate.

B. *Structural Metaphors of Knowledge*

Table 7 provides information about four source domains that clarify knowledge. Overall, it can be observed that the most frequent usage is KNOWLEDGE IS A SYSTEM with 42.85%; the second position is KNOWLEDGE IS A STRUCTURE (23.80%); and the third position is KNOWLEDGE IS A CODE (19.04%). Finally, KNOWLEDGE IS A NETWORK is the least frequent usage, with 14.28%.

TABLE 7
FREQUENCY OF STRUCTURAL METAPHORS OF KNOWLEDGE IN "THE NAMES"

No.	Structural metaphors of Knowledge	Number of metaphorical expressions	%
1	KNOWLEDGE IS A SYSTEM	9	42.85
2	KNOWLEDGE IS A STRUCTURE	5	23.81
3	KNOWLEDGE IS A CODE	4	19.05
4	KNOWLEDGE IS A NETWORK	3	14.29
Total		21	100

(a). *Knowledge Is a System*

The structural metaphor KNOWLEDGE IS A SYSTEM conceptualizes knowledge as an organized network of

interconnected elements that function together according to internal rules or structures. This metaphor draws on human experience with complex systems such as technological networks, bureaucratic institutions, or computational frameworks, where multiple components interact to produce coordinated outcomes. When mapped onto the abstract domain of KNOWLEDGE, this metaphor frames it not as isolated pieces of information but as part of an integrated structure in which ideas, data, and interpretations are interconnected.

TABLE 8
METAPHORICAL EXAMPLES REPRESENTING “KNOWLEDGE IS A SYSTEM”

No.	Metaphorical examples	
	SYSTEM	KNOWLEDGE
1	“He wants a <i>design</i> that will make this array of characters speak to him.” (p. 40)	Knowledge is organized like an interconnected system where meaning emerges from structured arrangement of elements.
2	“With his <i>grids and lists</i> the decipherer searches out relationships...” (p. 40)	Knowledge acquisition is framed as analytical processing within a structured system of relationships and categories.
3	“... <i>broken down</i> to these wedge-shaped marks.” (p. 40)	Knowledge is conceptualized as decomposable into smaller units, like elements within a structured analytical system.
4	“Working outward from some <i>private screen</i> ...” (p. 83)	Cognition is framed as a processing system that organizes and projects internal representations outward.
5	“...the perception that the <i>program must end this way</i> .” (p. 102)	Knowledge is deterministic, functioning like a programmed system with predictable outcomes.
6	“Everything... is made to <i>serve as a personal philosophy, an explanation</i> ...” (p. 142)	Knowledge functions as an integrated system that organizes experience into coherent explanatory frameworks.
7	“They mock our need to structure and classify, to build a <i>system</i> ...” (p. 150)	Human understanding depends on constructing ordered systems to make sense of reality.
8	“They make the <i>system equal to the terror</i> .” (p. 150)	Knowledge systems are constructed to match and control complex or chaotic phenomena.
9	“Let the investigators work up <i>chronologies, trace routes</i> ...” (p. 161)	Understanding is achieved by mapping sequences and connections like system pathways.

(b). *Knowledge Is a Structure*

The metaphor KNOWLEDGE IS A STRUCTURE conceptualizes knowledge as a constructed entity composed of interconnected parts arranged in an organized and stable configuration. This metaphor is grounded in human experience with physical structures such as buildings or architectural frameworks, where individual components are arranged systematically to create a coherent whole. When mapped onto the domain of KNOWLEDGE, this metaphor allows knowledge to be understood as something that is built, organized, and supported by underlying frameworks.

TABLE 9
METAPHORICAL EXAMPLES REPRESENTING “KNOWLEDGE IS A STRUCTURE”

No.	Metaphorical examples	
	STRUCTURE	KNOWLEDGE
1	“He wants a design... <i>parallel structures</i> .” (p. 40)	Knowledge is constructed like an architectural form with internal organization.
2	“Owen and I had spent several hours <i>building theories</i> ...” (p. 105)	Theories are constructed objects, assembled piece by piece.
3	“...surrounding the bare act with desperate <i>speculations</i> , mainly to comfort ourselves.” (p. 105)	Knowledge is layered and expanded through conceptual additions.
4	“The victim and the act are <i>theory now</i> .” (p. 142)	Reality is reconstructed into abstract conceptual frameworks.
5	“They form the <i>philosophical base</i> he relies on for his sense of self.” (p. 142)	Knowledge serves as a foundational structure supporting identity.

(c). *Knowledge Is a Code*

The conceptual metaphor KNOWLEDGE IS A CODE frames knowledge as a system of symbols, signs, or encoded messages that require interpretation and decoding. This metaphor is grounded in human experience with linguistic systems, cryptography, and digital encoding, where meaning is not immediately transparent but must be accessed through processes of interpretation. When mapped onto the abstract domain of KNOWLEDGE, this metaphor suggests that knowledge is not directly accessible but is instead embedded within layers of representation that must be deciphered.

TABLE 10
METAPHORICAL EXAMPLES REPRESENTING “KNOWLEDGE IS A CODE”

No.	Metaphorical examples	
	CODE	KNOWLEDGE
1	“The entire <i>code</i> is done this way.” (p. 11)	Knowledge is encoded information that must be deciphered to be understood.
2	“...how far men will go to satisfy a <i>pattern</i> , or find a <i>pattern</i> , or fit together the elements of a <i>pattern</i> .” (p. 39)	Understanding arises from decoding patterned elements into meaningful wholes.
3	“All the noise and babble and spit of three spoken languages had been <i>subdued and codified</i> ...” (p. 40)	Knowledge is stabilized through symbolic encoding systems like language.
4	“We track <i>static letters</i> when we read.” (p. 142)	Reading is conceptualized as decoding fixed symbolic units.

(d). *Knowledge Is a Network*

The metaphor KNOWLEDGE IS A NETWORK conceptualizes knowledge as a web of interconnected nodes through which information flows and relationships are established. This metaphor is grounded in human experience with networks such as communication systems, social connections, and digital infrastructures, where elements are linked together in dynamic and often decentralized ways. When mapped onto the abstract domain of KNOWLEDGE, this metaphor frames it as a distributed system in which meaning emerges from the relationships among multiple pieces of information.

TABLE 11
METAPHORICAL EXAMPLES REPRESENTING “KNOWLEDGE IS A NETWORK”

No.	Metaphorical examples	
	NETWORK	KNOWLEDGE
1	“...some alphabetic <i>link</i> between the victim’s name and the place where he or she was killed.” (p. 83)	Knowledge emerges through connections between discrete elements.
2	“Learn their names... <i>connect things</i> .” (p. 161)	Understanding is the act of linking information nodes.
3	“Eliades, Rowser, Hardeman, all the tenuous <i>connections</i> .” (p. 161)	Knowledge is fragile and contingent upon associative links.

In summary, the examples discussed above provide further support for the CMT by Lakoff and Johnson, in which knowledge functions as the target domain and is understood through various source domains. The analysis indicates that a total of nine source domains are employed to conceptualize knowledge in the novel *The Names*. The findings also reveal that these metaphorical representations are realized through a total of nine overarching conceptual metaphors. In terms of distribution, the data consist of 21 instances of structural metaphors and 17 instances of ontological metaphors. This distribution highlights the prominence of structural metaphors in shaping the conceptualization of knowledge, while ontological metaphors also play a significant role in representing knowledge as concrete and bounded entities.

V. DISCUSSION

The analysis of knowledge metaphors in *The Names* demonstrates that knowledge is conceptualized through a network of diverse ontological and structural metaphors, reflecting the complexity and richness of cognitive representation in the text. Among ontological metaphors, KNOWLEDGE IS AN OBJECT is the most prevalent (41.18%), framing knowledge as a tangible entity that can be acquired, held, or transferred. This representation positions knowledge as both a personal asset and a medium for social interaction, aligning with traditional views of it as a stable resource. Complementary metaphors, such as KNOWLEDGE IS A CONTAINER and KNOWLEDGE IS A SUBSTANCE, further illustrate that knowledge can be contained within boundaries while simultaneously circulating and evolving like a material substance. Metaphors including KNOWLEDGE IS AN ENTITY and KNOWLEDGE IS A POSSESSION highlight the dynamic and social dimensions of knowledge. Knowledge is depicted not as static but as capable of growth, mobility, and interaction, emphasizing the complex relationship between humans and knowledge. These conceptualizations suggest that knowledge in the novel functions as a living phenomenon, shaped by and shaping both characters and social context. Regarding structural metaphors, KNOWLEDGE IS A SYSTEM emerges as the most frequent (42.85%), portraying knowledge as an organized network of interconnected elements. KNOWLEDGE IS A STRUCTURE and KNOWLEDGE IS A CODE underscore the organized and symbolic nature of knowledge, while KNOWLEDGE IS A NETWORK emphasizes interconnectivity and decentralization, illustrating that knowledge arises from relational linkages rather than existing in isolation.

The interaction of ontological and structural metaphors constructs a conceptualization of knowledge that is simultaneously stable and flexible, concrete and abstract, resonating with postmodern perspectives in which knowledge is complex, fragmented, and context-dependent. Quantitative analysis and textual evidence indicate that while concrete metaphors dominate, structural metaphors play a crucial role in representing how knowledge is organized, interconnected, and interpreted. These findings not only support Lakoff and Johnson’s CMT but also show that *The Names* employs metaphor to convey the multidimensionality of knowledge: as a possessable object, a network of relationships, and a structured system. From a theoretical perspective, the study demonstrates the applicability of conceptual metaphor

analysis in literary studies, revealing both how characters comprehend knowledge and how authors structure and communicate complex cognitive content. Practically, these insights can enhance education and knowledge communication, as metaphors such as “knowledge is an object” or “knowledge is a network” provide intuitive ways for learners to visualize and engage with knowledge as a dynamic, relational, and culturally embedded phenomenon. Overall, the diversity of metaphors underscores the flexible, interactive, and context-sensitive nature of knowledge, encouraging critical and creative approaches to its study, dissemination, and application in contemporary life and literature.

VI. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study provide further support for the CMT proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), particularly in relation to KNOWLEDGE as a target domain. The analysis reveals that nine distinct source domains are employed to conceptualize knowledge in *The Names*. These include KNOWLEDGE IS AN OBJECT, KNOWLEDGE IS A CONTAINER, KNOWLEDGE IS A SUBSTANCE, KNOWLEDGE IS AN ENTITY, KNOWLEDGE IS A POSSESSION, KNOWLEDGE IS A SYSTEM, KNOWLEDGE IS A CODE, KNOWLEDGE IS A STRUCTURE, and KNOWLEDGE IS A NETWORK. Together, these metaphorical patterns demonstrate the richness and diversity of ways in which knowledge is constructed and represented in the novel. The study also concludes that metaphor extends far beyond its traditional role as a purely linguistic or stylistic device. Instead, it reflects a fundamental aspect of human cognition, whereby individuals naturally form connections between different conceptual domains. In this sense, metaphor serves as a cognitive mechanism that shapes how ideas are organized and understood. Consequently, literary texts such as novels offer valuable insights into how authors perceive, interpret, and relate their experiences of the world.

Moreover, the use of metaphor enables readers to approach the narrative from multiple perspectives. Through specific linguistic devices, particularly conceptual metaphors, abstract ideas are systematically structured in ways that contribute to the development of narrative elements such as characters, settings, and thematic meanings. These metaphors are not arbitrary; rather, they are grounded in everyday cognitive processes, making them both meaningful and accessible to readers. As a result, language in literary works often shifts from literal to figurative expression depending on how concepts are understood within human cognition. The construction of meaning in *The Names* therefore goes beyond mere rhetorical ornamentation or stylistic effect. Instead, it reflects a deeper process of meaning-making, in which conceptual metaphors play a central role. The application of CMT demonstrates that the meanings embedded in the novel can be systematically uncovered and interpreted. This confirms that metaphor is not only a tool for artistic expression but also a key to understanding how knowledge is conceptualized and communicated in literary discourse.

REFERENCES

- [1] Alduais, A., Al-Khawlani, A., Almaghlouth, S., & Alfadda, H. (2022). Cognitive linguistics: Analysis of mapping knowledge domains. *Journal of Intelligence*, 10(4), 1-41. <https://doi.org/10.3390/jintelligence10040093>
- [2] Beknazarova, U. U., Almautova, A. B., Yelemessova, S. M., & Abadildayeva, S. K. (2021). The cognitive function of a conceptual metaphor and its methodological foundations. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 17(3), 1312-1324. <https://doi.org/10.52462/jlls.94>
- [3] Carston, R., & Yan, X. (2023). Metaphor processing: Referring and predicating. *Cognition*, 238(2), 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cognition.2023.105534>
- [4] Dasen, P. R. (2022). Culture and cognitive development. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 53(7-8), 789-816. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00220221221092409>
- [5] Gibbs, R., Lima, P. L. C., & Francozo, E. (2004). Metaphor is grounded in embodied experience. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 36(7), 1189-1210. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2003.10.009>
- [6] Gibbs, R. W. (2008). *The Cambridge handbook of metaphor and thought*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10926488.2011.535420>
- [7] Gunawardena, C. N., Flor, N. V., & Sanchez, D. M. (2025). *Knowledge co-construction in online learning*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003324461-4>
- [8] Hicke, R. M. M., & Kristensen-McLachlan, R. D. (2024). Science is exploration: Computational frontiers for conceptual metaphor theory. In *Proceedings of the Computational Humanities Research Conference 2024* (Vol. 3834, pp. 1105-1116). CEUR-WS. <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2410.08991>
- [9] Kövecses, Z. (2010). *Metaphor: A practical introduction*. Oxford University Press.
- [10] Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. University of Chicago Press.
- [11] Lakoff, G. (1987). *Women, fire, and dangerous things: What categories reveal about the mind*. University of Chicago Press.
- [12] Manerko, L. (2019). Knowledge structures and ways of their description in cognitive terminology research. *Terminologija*, 26(1), 47-72. <https://doi.org/10.35321/term26-03>
- [13] Muis, K. R., Chevrier, M., Denton, C. A., & Losenno, K. M. (2021). Epistemic emotions and epistemic cognition predict critical thinking about socio-scientific issues. *Frontiers in Education*, 6(4), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2021.669908>
- [14] Ospina, D. L. G., Suaza, A., & de la Torre, M. S. (2024). Embodied simulation as a mechanism for understanding concrete and metaphorical language: A literature review. *Revista de Estudos da Linguagem*, 32(2), 641-666. <https://doi.org/10.17851/2237-2083.32.2.641-666>
- [15] Özçalışkan, S., & Goldin-Meadow, S. (2025). Does gesture follow speech in describing metaphorical motion events over developmental time? *Brain and Language*, 270(11), 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bandl.2025.105620>
- [16] St Amant, K. (2022). Context, cognition, and the dynamics of design thinking: Cognitive methods for understanding the

situational variables affecting usable design. *Technical Communication*, 69(1), 26-38. <https://doi.org/10.55177/tc796562>



Tran Thi Le Dung is a lecturer and currently the Deputy Dean of the Faculty of English, Hanoi Open University, Hanoi, Vietnam. She received her Bachelor's Degree in English from University of Languages and International Studies (ULIS), Vietnam National University, Hanoi (VNU-HN), her Master's Degree in English Teaching from University of Victoria, Australia, and her Ph.D. in contrastive linguistics from Academy of Social Sciences, Vietnam. Her research interests include synonyms, idioms in English and Vietnamese, contrastive linguistics, and English language teaching and learning. Email address: tranledung1975@hou.edu.vn